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ABSTRACT

The Tennessee School Climate Inventory was developed as part of a learning-environment information system to be used in a school-restructuring effort known as Positive Attitudes in Tennessee Schools (PATS). Initiated in Tennessee during the 1989-90 school year, the project sought to improve school-learning environments through school-leadership teams that were responsible for informed, data-based decision making and planning. This paper describes the Tennessee School Climate Inventory and its uses and provides sample applications. The collection and reporting of school-based data in a systemic way is grounded in a conceptual scheme that seeks to link information needs with decisions and actions likely to result in improved educational quality. Information obtained through the school-climate scales permits school leaders to assess opinions held by school personnel and to develop strategies for correcting climate factors that may impede school effectiveness. The inventory contains 49 statements, comprised of 7 scales of 7 items each, which yield quantitative estimates of school-climate dimensions. The seven scales of the inventory are: order, leadership, environment, involvement, instruction, expectations, and collaboration. Sample results for three waves of data from a hypothetical school are included. Three tables and nine figures are included. (LMI)

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The University of Memphis
Memphis, TN 38152

Sample Tennessee School Climate Profile

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Sample Tennessee School Climate Profile

The *Tennessee School Climate Inventory* was developed as part of a learning environment information system to be used in a school restructuring effort, known as PATS (Positive Attitudes in Tennessee Schools), initiated in the State of Tennessee during the 1989-90 school year. The major goal of the project was to improve school learning environments through school leadership teams responsible for informed (data-based) decision making and planning. Coordination and technical assistance were to be provided to the school leadership teams by state department personnel.

The collection and reporting of school-based data in a systematic way in PATS was grounded on a conceptual scheme that seeks to link information needs with decisions and actions likely to result in improved educational quality. Information obtained through the school climate scales permits school leaders to assess the status of perceptions and opinions of school personnel and to develop strategies to address those climate factors that may inhibit or limit the effectiveness of the school. School leaders in the participating school sites must make the logical connections between the appropriateness of the information and strategies developed to improve educational quality. The data yielded by the scales can also inform school practitioners in ways that assist and motivate them to adopt behaviors and styles likely to result in improved organizational climates that better support teaching and learning in the classrooms.

School Climate Assessment

Empirical indicators of school climate dimensions generated through the *Tennessee School Climate Inventory* are those logically and empirically linked with factors associated with effective school organizational climates. The inventory contains 49 statements. These statements comprise seven scales of seven items each, which yield quantitative estimates of school climate dimensions. Responses are scored through use of Likert-type ratings (strong disagreement to strong agreement, 1-5). Each scale yields summative scores ranging from 7 to 35 with higher scores being more positive. Scale mean scores are translated to T (transformed) scores. Standardized T scores have a mean of 50 and a standard

deviation of 10 and are based on norms constructed from information obtained over several years in Tennessee public schools. Additional items solicit personal information, and information on tracer and school variables such as school size, community type, region of the state, grade level assignment, and position within the school.

The seven scales of the inventory are listed below along with descriptions and item numbers. Negative items are underlined; responses to these items are reversed for computing scale mean and T scores.

1. *Order*: Extent to which the environment is ordered and appropriate student behaviors are present. Scale items: 13, 23, 25, 30, 39, 44, 46
2. *Leadership*: Extent to which the administration provides instructional leadership. Scale items: 8, 20, 34, 36, 42, 45, 47
3. *Environment*: Extent to which positive learning environments exist. Scale items: 7, 9, 10, 14, 29, 38, 49
4. *Involvement*: Extent to which parents and the community are involved in the school. Scale items: 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 32, 37
5. *Instruction*: Extent to which the instructional program is developed and implemented. Scale items: 4, 15, 24, 33, 35, 41, 48
6. *Expectations*: Extent to which students are expected to learn and be responsible. Scale items: 2, 3, 17, 21, 22, 27, 43
7. *Collaboration*: Extent to which the administration, faculty, and students cooperate and participate in problem solving. Scale items: 1, 6, 16, 26, 28, 31, 40

Face validity of the school climate items and logical ordering of the items by scales were established by the research team during the development of the inventory. Subsequent analysis of responses collected through administration of the inventory in a variety of school sites substantiate validity of the items. The items and scales have appropriate discriminatory power, i.e., yield empirical indicators that differentiate schools on the variables assessed. Reliability coefficients indicate that the total inventory and scales possess good internal consistency.

Annual school climate audits are reported for each PATS site as cross-sectional results so that variations at one point in time are evident. Longitudinal profiles of patterns across time reflect patterns of stability or change within the organizational contexts of the participating school sites.

Sample School Climate Audits

Summarized in the attached profile are sample results for three waves of data from a hypothetical school. The data profiles were developed as a training aid in the utilization of data to prepare school improvement action plans.

Three types of information are presented in the tables and graphs. Demographic information about respondents is reported in Section 1 (pp. 1-2). In Section 2 (pp. 3-9) seven tables report the percent of respondents agreeing with individual items at three points in time. Items are grouped within dimensions or domains, each of which contains seven items. For each dimension, a raw scale mean score is given along with the transformed (T score) mean. Graphic profiles of the results by time are also included in Section 2.

Section 3 (pp. 10-11) presents summary statistics for the seven climate dimensions. Scale means are presented in the first table. T scores for the seven dimensions are presented in the second table.

Tennessee School
School Climate Audits: 1993 - 1995

Section 1: Respondent Demographics: Percentages by Categories

Age Group						
	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
29 or less	3.3	8.8	5.3			
30 - 39	18.9	21.1	28.1			
40 - 49	46.7	38.6	40.4			
50 - 59	22.2	24.6	19.3			
60 or over	8.9	7	7			
N	54	57	58			

Gender						
	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
Female	54.8	51.6	55.2			
Male	33.3	47.9	44.8			
N	54	57	58			

Ethnic Background						
	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
African-American	23.3	25.9	25.9			
European-American	76.7	74.1	74.1			
Other						
N	54	57	58			

Section 1: Respondent Demographics: Percentages by Categories (continued)

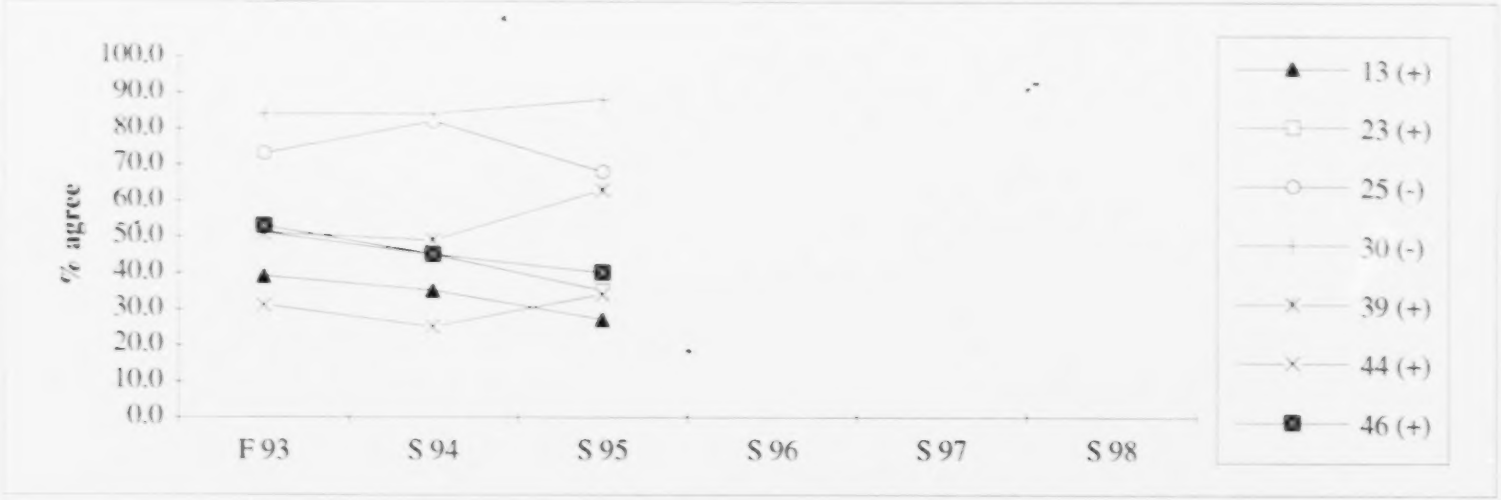
Educational Attainment						
	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
H.S. Diploma or less	1.1	5.3				
Associate degree	1.1	1.8	5.3			
Bachelor's degree	34.4	36.8	29.8			
Master's degree	51.1	45.6	50.9			
Degree beyond Master's	12.2	10.5	14.0			
N	54	57	58			

Total Years of Teaching Experience						
	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
1 to 5	13.2	12.3	12.3			
6 to 10	9.9	15.8	15.8			
11 to 15	13.2	14.0	14.0			
16 to 20	16.5	12.3	12.3			
More than 20	47.3	45.6	45.6			
N	54	57	58			

Total Years of Experience at this School						
	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
Less than 1	6.6	3.5	1.8			
1 to 5	46.2	49.1	51.8			
6 to 10	15.4	14.0	21.4			
11 to 15	7.7	10.5	10.7			
More than 15	24.2	22.8	14.3			
N	54	57	58			

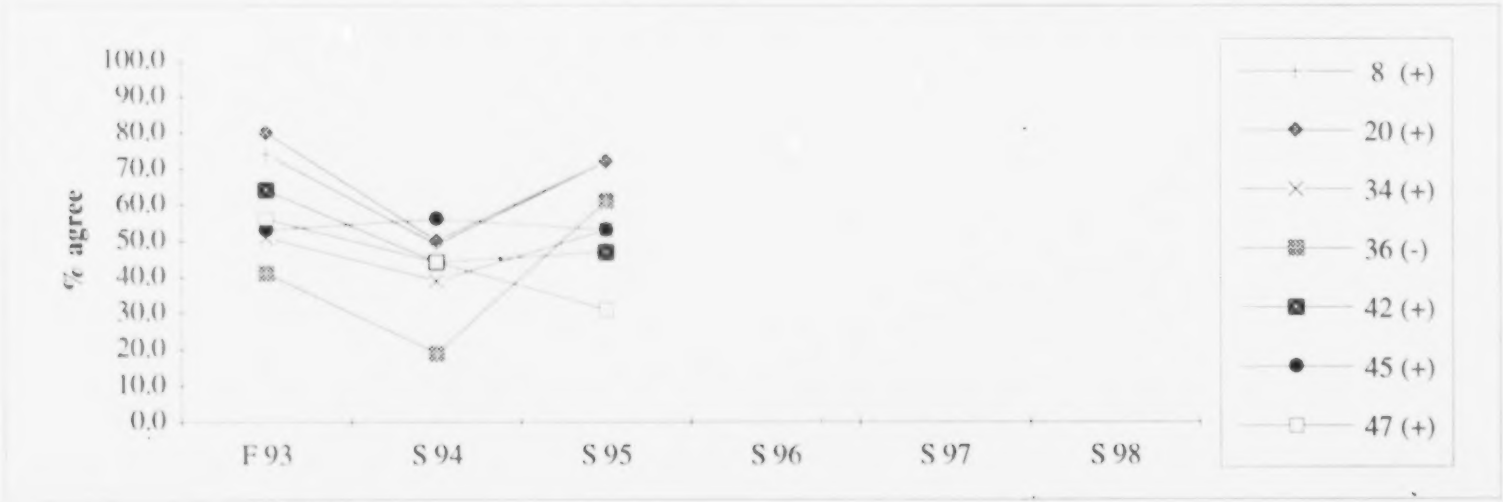
Section 2: School Climate Dimensions: Percentage Agree by Item

ORDER							
Item	Number	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
Rules for student behavior are consistently enforced.	13 (+)	39.0	35.0	27.0			
Student discipline is administered fairly and appropriately.	23 (+)	51.0	45.0	35.0			
Student misbehavior interferes with teaching.	25 (-)	73.0	82.0	68.0			
Tardiness and absence is a major problem.	30 (-)	84.0	84.0	88.0			
The school is a safe and secure place in which to work.	39 (+)	51.0	49.0	63.0			
Joint responsibility for student discipline exist.	44 (+)	31.0	25.0	34.0			
Student behavior is generally positive.	46 (+)	53.0	45.0	40.0			
	Scale Mean	18.8	19.2	17.6			
	T - score	38	40	33			
	N	54	57	58			



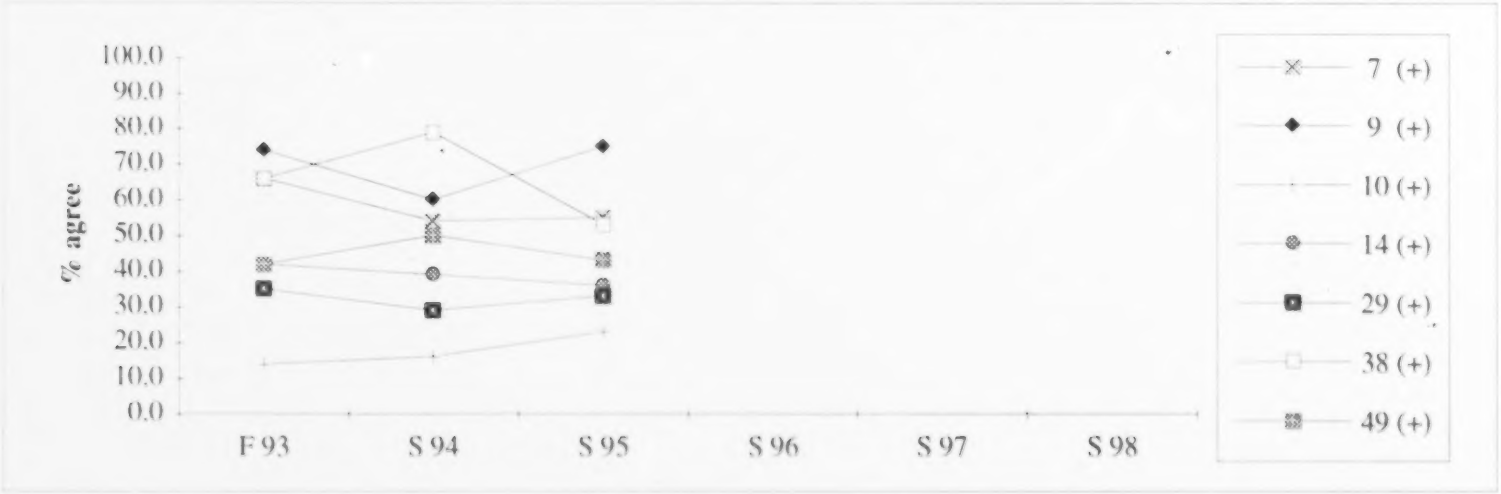
Section 2: School Climate Dimensions: Percentage Agree by Item (continued)

LEADERSHIP							
Item	Number	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
Administration communicates that all students can learn.	8 (+)	74.0	49.0	72.0			
Administration encourages teachers to be creative.	20 (+)	80.0	50.0	72.0			
Principal provides feedback on staff performance.	34 (+)	51.0	39.0	53.0			
Administration does not protect instructional time.	36 (-)	41.0	19.0	61.0			
Principal provides instructional leadership.	42 (+)	64.0	44.0	47.0			
Goals of this school are reviewed and updated regularly.	45 (+)	53.0	56.0	53.0			
Principal is highly visible throughout the school.	47 (+)	56.0	44.0	31.0			
	Scale Mean	24.1	22.1	22.1			
	T - score	46	39	39			
	N	54	57	58			



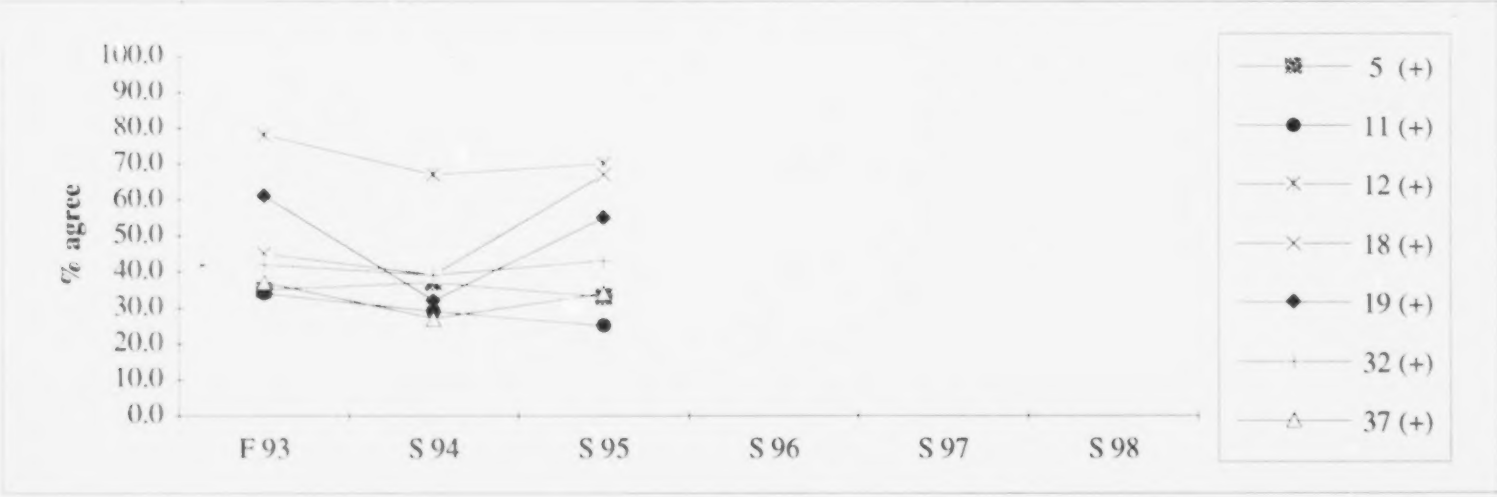
Section 2: School Climate Dimensions: Percentage Agree by Item (continued)

ENVIRONMENT							
Item	Number	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
Faculty and staff feel they are an important.	7 (+)	66.0	54.0	55.0			
Varied learning environments are provided.	9 (+)	74.0	60.0	75.0			
The school building is neat, bright, clean, and comfortable.	10 (+)	14.0	16.0	23.0			
School employee's and students show respect for each other.	14 (+)	42.0	39.0	36.0			
An atmosphere of trust exists between administration and faculty.	29 (+)	35.0	29.0	33.0			
Teachers reflect pride in the school and its students.	38 (+)	66.0	79.0	53.0			
People in this school really care about each other.	49 (+)	42.0	50.0	43.0			
	Scale Mean	22.3	23.9	22.6			
	T - score	44	47	45			
	N	54	57	58			



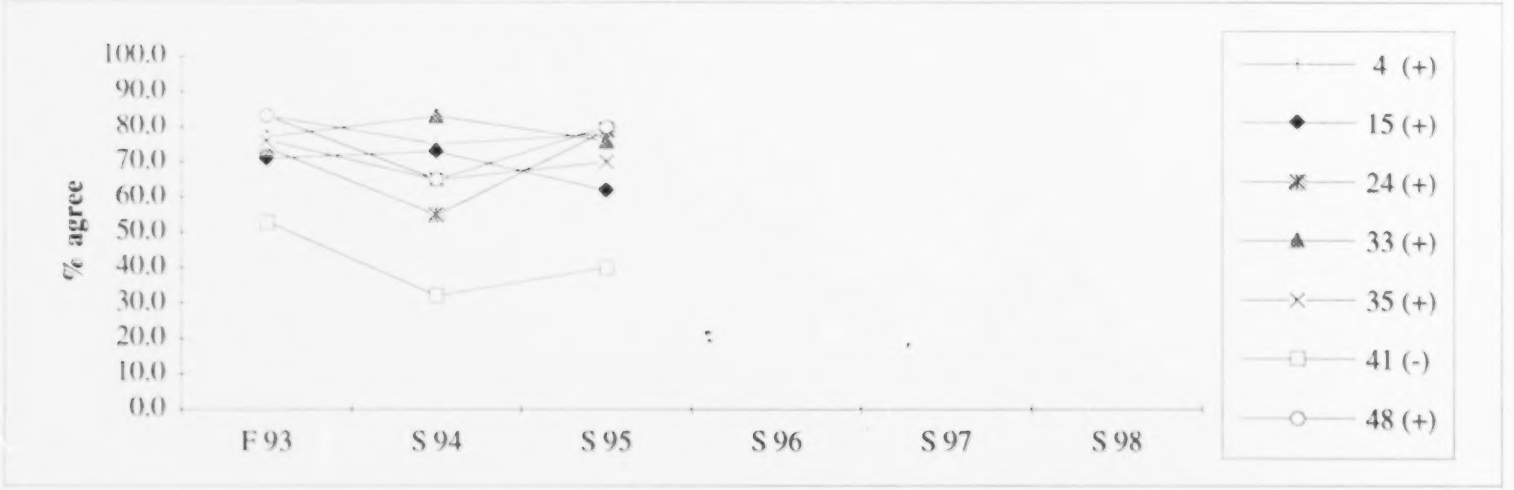
Section 2: School Climate Dimensions: Percentage Agree by Item (continued)

INVOLVEMENT							
Item	Number	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
Community businesses are active in the school.	5 (+)	35.0	37.0	33.0			
Parents are involved in a home and school support network.	11 (+)	34.0	29.0	25.0			
Parents are treated courteously when they call or visit the school.	12 (+)	78.0	67.0	70.0			
Parents are invited to serve on school advisory committees.	18 (+)	45.0	39.0	67.0			
Parent volunteers are used wherever possible.	19 (+)	61.0	32.0	55.0			
A school newsletter . . . is used to communicate to parents.	32 (+)	42.0	39.0	43.0			
Parents are invited to visit classrooms.	37 (+)	37.0	27.0	34.0			
	Scale Mean	22.6	21.6	22.2			
	T - score	49	47	48			
	N	54	57	58			



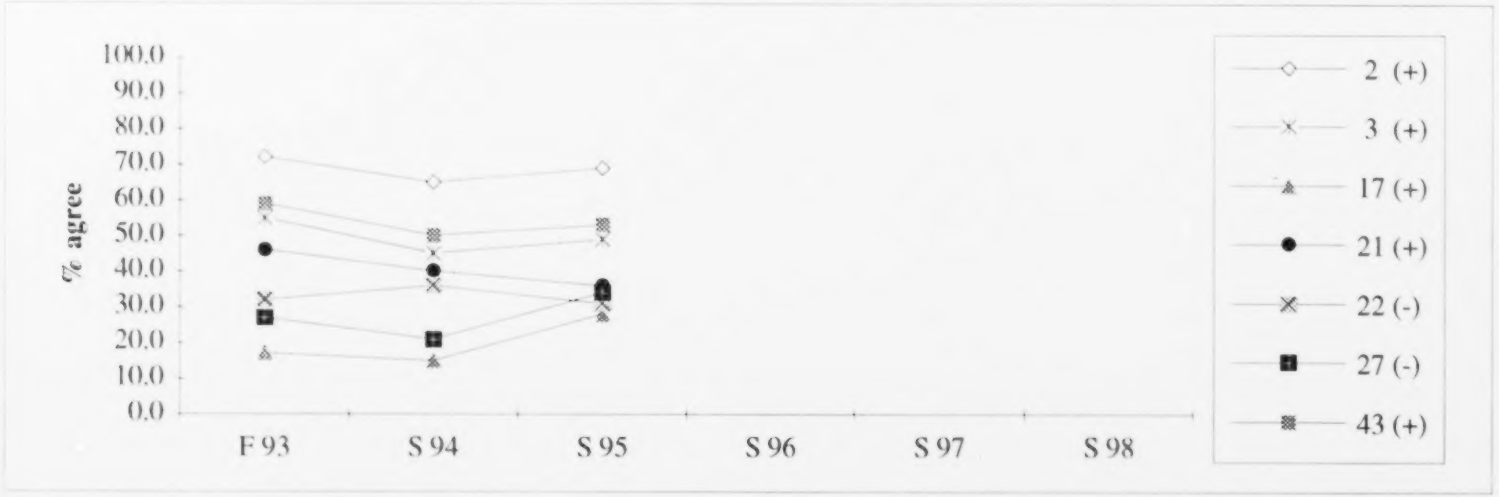
Section 2: School Climate Dimensions: Percentage Agree by Item (continued)

INSTRUCTION							
Item	Number	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies or models.	4 (+)	83.0	75.0	78.0			
Teachers sequence learning activities so students experience success.	15 (+)	71.0	73.0	62.0			
Opportunities exist for students to develop higher-order skills.	24 (+)	74.0	55.0	79.0			
Curriculum guides insure coverage of subject content.	33 (+)	77.0	83.0	76.0			
Teachers use appropriate evaluation methods.	35 (+)	76.0	65.0	70.0			
Pull-out programs interfere with basic skills instruction.	41 (-)	53.0	32.0	40.0			
Teachers use a wide range of teaching materials and media.	48 (+)	83.0	65.0	80.0			
	Scale Mean	25.0	24.5	24.6			
	T - score	47	46	46			
	N	54	57	58			



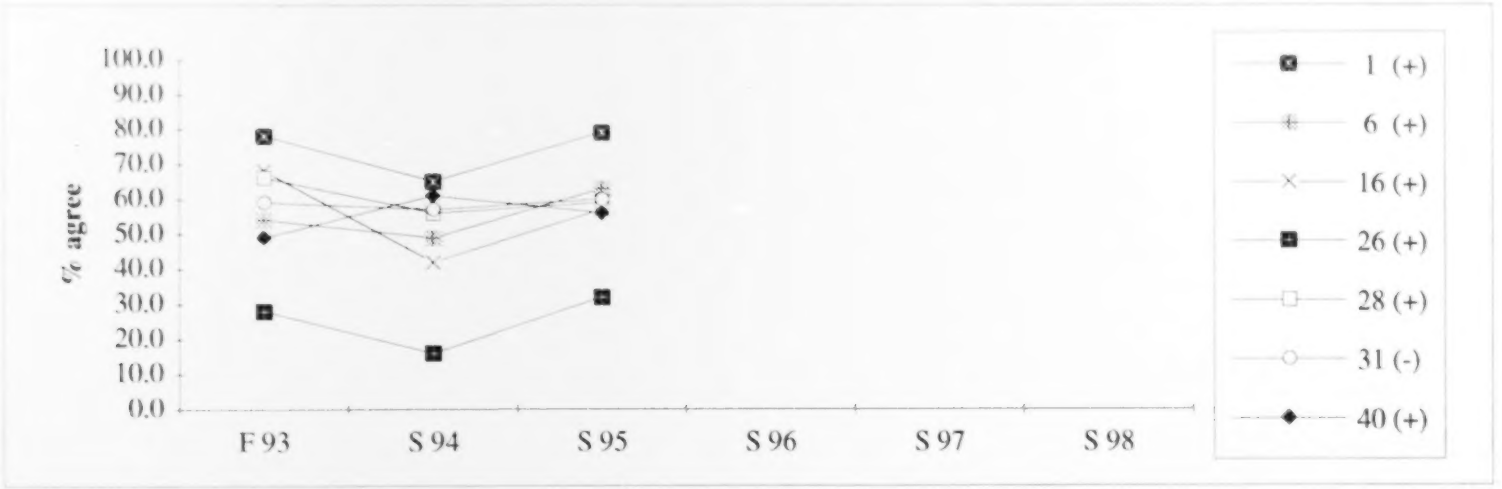
Section 2: School Climate Dimensions: Percentage Agree by Item (continued)

EXPECTATIONS							
Item	Number	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
Low achieving students are given opportunity for success.	2 (+)	72.0	65.0	69.0			
School rules/expectations are clearly defined and communicated.	3 (+)	55.0	45.0	49.0			
Students share the responsibility for keeping the school clean.	17 (+)	17.0	15.0	28.0			
Students are held responsible for their actions.	21 (+)	46.0	40.0	36.0			
Many students are not expected to master basic skills.	22 (-)	32.0	36.0	31.0			
Students do not participate in...activities because of their sex,race.	27 (-)	27.0	21.0	34.0			
Teachers hold consistently high expectations for all students.	43 (+)	59.0	50.0	53.0			
	Scale Mean	22.2	21.2	21.9			
	T - score	39	37	38			
	N	54	57	58			



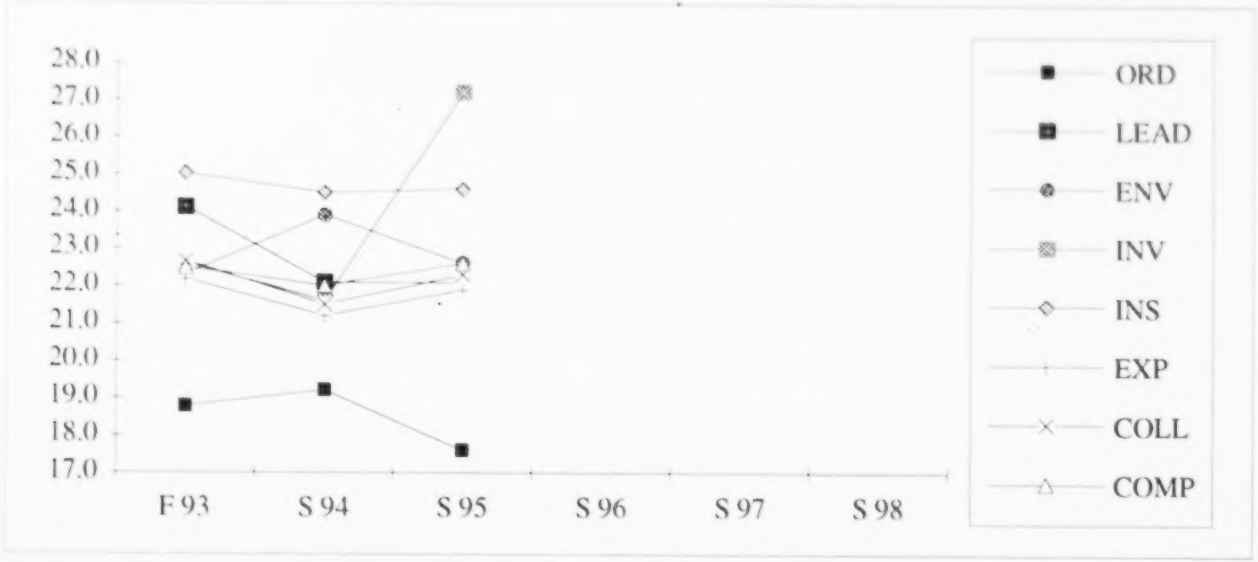
Section 2: School Climate Dimensions: Percentage Agree by Item (continued)

COLLABORATION							
Item	Number	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
The faculty and staff share a sense of commitment to the school goals.	1 (+)	78.0	65.0	79.0			
Students are encouraged to help others with problems.	6 (+)	54.0	49.0	63.0			
Teachers are encouraged to communicate their concerns.	16 (+)	68.0	42.0	57.0			
Students participate, when appropriate, in solving school problems.	26 (+)	28.0	16.0	32.0			
There is a great deal of cooperative effort among the faculty and staff.	28 (+)	66.0	56.0	59.0			
Teachers need to be allowed to participate more in decision-making.	31 (-)	59.0	57.0	60.0			
Most school problems can be solved by the principal and staff.	40 (+)	49.0	61.0	56.0			
	Scale Mean	22.7	21.5	22.3			
	T - score	47	45	46			
	N	54	57	58			



Section 3: Dimension Means and T-scores

Dimension Means						
	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
ORD	18.8	19.2	17.6			
LEAD	24.1	22.1	22.1			
ENV	22.3	23.9	22.6			
INV	22.6	21.6	27.2			
INS	25.0	24.5	24.6			
EXP	22.2	21.2	21.9			
COLL	22.7	21.5	22.3			
COMP	22.5	22.0	22.6			
N	54	57	58			



Section 3: Dimension Means and T-scores (continued)

Dimension T-scores						
	F 93	S 94	S 95	S 96	S 97	S 98
ORD	38	40	33			
LEAD	46	39	39			
ENV	44	47	45			
INV	49	47	48			
INS	47	46	46			
EXP	39	37	38			
COLL	47	45	46			
COMP	44	43	42			
N	54	57	58